



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

December 22, 2020

Cecilia Munoz
Carmel Martin
Biden-Harris Transition Team

Dear Ms. Munoz and Ms. Martin:

The undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Rights Task Force write to urge strong support for the National Council on Disability (NCD) as a means of advancing President-Elect Biden's policy priorities for the disability community. In particular, we urge that President-Elect Biden appoint a new Chair of the NCD as quickly as possible and that the FY22 budget sent to Congress proposes increased funding for NCD's important work.

CCD is the largest coalition of national organizations working together to advocate for federal public policy that ensures the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society. We know the work and the worth of NCD very well.

NCD is an independent federal agency charged with advising the President, Congress, and other federal agencies concerning policies, programs, practices, and procedures that affect people with disabilities. NCD has been a key player in advancing the rights of people with disabilities, including through identifying barriers that exist for people with disabilities and recommending administrative and legislative solutions, exploring how implementation of disability rights laws is working, and developing innovative proposals to improve the lives of people with disabilities. Indeed, NCD played an important role leading to passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In 1986, it released a report recommending the enactment of a federal anti-discrimination law protecting people with disabilities, and in 1988 it published draft legislation that helped to galvanize efforts to enact the ADA.

Among other things, NCD fulfills its mission through convening stakeholders to gather information, analyzing data and available information, influencing public discourse and debate, and providing tools to facilitate effective implementation of the laws. It brings together a broad spectrum of the disability community, including people with disabilities, advocates, family members, service providers, policymakers, and other stakeholders, and works with federal agencies and Congress to effectuate policies that serve the goals and needs of the disability community.

NCD's work will be crucial to advancing the priorities identified by President-Elect Biden, including addressing the challenges presented by COVID-19, promoting economic recovery and advancing racial equity. Each of these issues is inextricably intertwined with disability rights. For example, COVID-19 has had a disproportionate and devastating effect on people with disabilities, and there are critical policy changes that must be effectuated to save lives that continue to be lost due to COVID's ravaging of congregate care settings for people with disabilities. Deaths of individuals in these settings account for forty percent of U.S. deaths from COVID-19. There is an urgent need to develop a national strategy to facilitate transitions and diversions from congregate care settings to community housing and expand and strengthen home and community-based services for people with disabilities and older adults. Direction is also needed to ensure that vaccine distribution prioritizes people living and working in congregate care settings and that they are afforded informed choice; and that state and hospital schemes to ration scarce life-saving treatment do not discriminate based on disability, age, race, and other factors – areas where NCD has already been actively engaged. Due to health disparities experienced in communities of color, the disability discrimination concerns posed by COVID have the most dramatic effect on disabled people of color—particularly Black and Indigenous people. There is a direct intersection between racial equity and disability rights concerns in medical rationing, in vaccine allocation, and in addressing congregate care settings (where staff are overwhelmingly people of color and facilities with the starkest problems disproportionately serve people of color). NCD is already engaged on these issues and far more remains to be done.

Additionally, COVID has worsened the already dire employment situation for people with disabilities. NCD has been doing critically important work to promote changes that will substantially increase competitive integrated employment opportunities for people with disabilities and that work must not only continue but must address the new and additional barriers—as well as identify new opportunities—posed by COVID-19.

To be effective, NCD must be adequately funded. There is a tremendous amount of work for the agency to do and it is imperative that NCD be fully resourced and supported so the agency's work can be effective. We urge you to ensure that the agency receives sufficient funding to fulfill its mission at this important juncture. Additionally, given the urgency of COVID-19 and its impact on people with disabilities, we urge the Administration to prioritize appointing a new NCD Chair so that the agency will be able to engage immediately on these issues in a manner that will advance President-elect Biden's important commitments to the disability community.

Sincerely,

American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

American Council of the Blind

American Foundation for the Blind

Association of People for Supported Employment: APSE

The Arc of the United States

Autism Society of America

Autistic Self Advocacy Network

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

Center for Public Representation

CommunicationFIRST

Council of Administrators of Special Education

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund

Easterseals

Epilepsy Foundation

National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

National Council on Independent Living

National Disability Rights Network

National Down Syndrome Congress

Paralyzed Veterans of America

RespectAbility

TDI

United Cerebral Palsy

United Spinal Association

US International Council on Disabilities

World Institute on Disability

cc:

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